

# STRUMTRACKS



# PICK & STRUM GUITAR

# Pick-and-Strum Guitar: Installation

## Prerequisites

It is assumed that if you are reading this you have a computer with a good quality sound card, a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) and a working knowledge of how to use plugins with the DAW.

Apart from that, all you will need is the free **sforzando** plugin from Plogue. You simply download it from <https://www.plogue.com/products/sforzando.html>, unzip it and make sure it is installed correctly in your DAW. (Check first to see if *sforzando* is compatible with your DAW.)

## Installation

*Pick-and-Strum Guitar* is in SFZ format, which means it does not need any special installation procedure. You simply unzip the downloaded file. It is recommended that you keep a backup on another drive.

**It is essential to keep the folders and files in their original relative positions, in order to keep the file paths between them intact.**

In case of any doubt, there is a single holding file, called “Pick-and-Strum Guitar”. Inside are four folders: “Documents”, “Instruments”, “Midi” and “Samples”. It doesn’t really matter where the Documents or Midi folders goes, but it makes sense to keep everything together. However, it is absolutely crucial that the Instruments folder and the Samples folder remain *inside the one folder*.

## Opening Pick-and-Strum Guitar

Once you have installed the **sforzando** plugin, and downloaded and unzipped the *Pick-and-Strum Guitar* file, you are ready to begin.



Open your DAW (Digital Audio Workstation), create an instrument track and open sforzando. To load *Pick-and-Strum Guitar* go to the top left of the sforzando interface and you will see a light grey panel that says: INSTRUMENT, and below it K-SWITCH. Click on INSTRUMENT and it will show three options: Empty, Import and Reload. Select Import and a file select box will open. Navigate to the location of the *Pick-and-Strum Guitar* folder on your computer, open the Instruments folder, then open the “PickStrum\_Plectrum” file. (You can open any of the three instrument files, but the ‘Plectrum’ instrument is the standard one you are likely to use most.)

Now you are ready to play.

*If you have any issues with your DAW or sforzando you will need to consult their own respective help options.*

### **Test Drive SFZ Before You Buy**

If you are unfamiliar with the SFZ format, you might like to satisfy yourself that everything will work properly before you buy *Pick-and-Strum Guitar*. Go through all the steps above, but instead of downloading *Pick-and-Strum Guitar*, download one of the free SFZ instruments from the list at: <https://sfzinstruments.github.io/>.

# Pick-and-Strum Guitar: Operation

## A Style with Two Parts: Pick + Strum

Pick-and-Strum guitar style is a way of playing guitar that is common in various kinds of folk, country and bluegrass music. Typically a note is played on one of the lower strings followed by one or more strums on the upper strings. The most characteristic example of this can be heard in the familiar ‘boom-chicka’ style that sets up a rhythmic accompaniment with alternating bass on the lower strings followed by a down strum or a quick down-up strum on the upper strings. *Pick-and-Strum Guitar* is designed to make recording tracks in this style of guitar as easy as possible.

## Designed for those who don't play keyboard

*Pick-and-Strum Guitar* has been designed primarily for those who don't play keyboard. There are many guitar sample libraries on the market but the vast majority presume that users can play keyboard. Yet there are many non-keyboardists who would like to be able to record good quality guitar tracks. *Pick-and-Strum Guitar* can be played ‘live’ to some extent but it would be difficult to make full use of its capacities in that way.

## The Instruments

Three instruments are included in *Pick-and-Strum Guitar*:

- PickStrum\_Plectrum
- PickStrum\_Finger
- PickStrum\_Melody

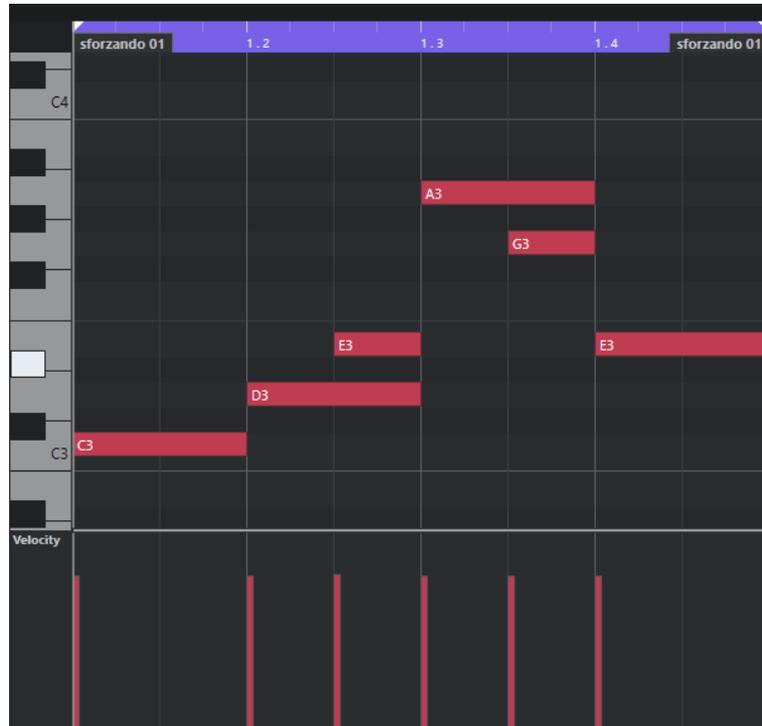
The *Plectrum* instrument uses samples of a guitar played with a pick, obviously. The *Finger* instrument has exactly the same layout as the Plectrum instrument, but the samples are of the same guitar played with the fingers. Although the most typical kind of pick-and-strum guitar playing uses a pick, it is also possible to play a ‘thumb-and-strum’ style with the fingers, especially useful for a solo singer accompanying him or herself. The *Melody* instrument can be used to create the melody track for styles such as bluegrass.

If you want you could load *Pick-and-Strum Guitar* in two tracks in your DAW (Digital Audio Workstation), one having either the Plectrum or Finger instruments, and the other having the Melody instrument. You could also load the Plectrum and Finger instruments on two tracks, pan them left and right, and have a doubled guitar sound.

## The Instrument Layout

### The Melody Instrument

The *Melody* instrument layout is the simplest to explain. It is monophonic and laid out chromatically like a piano keyboard. To get a legato effect like hammering on and pulling off, you simply extend the midi note of the first note so that it overlaps the next note. This triggers a different sample for the note that you are hammering on or pulling off *to*. Only extend this the minimum amount necessary, otherwise it will affect the following notes as well, which is not usually what you would want.



In this example you are hammering on from D3 to E3 and pulling off from A3 to G3. Since this instrument is monophonic you need to make sure no other notes are overlapping.

### Sundry Sounds

The melody instrument also includes a set of sundry sounds produced by various slaps and knocks on the body of the guitar. This enables the kind of performance where a guitarist intersperses normal playing with rhythmic percussive sounds.

F5 – Deadened Strum

F#5 – Palm Slap on Bridge

G5 – Palm Slap

G#5 – Sharp Finger Slap

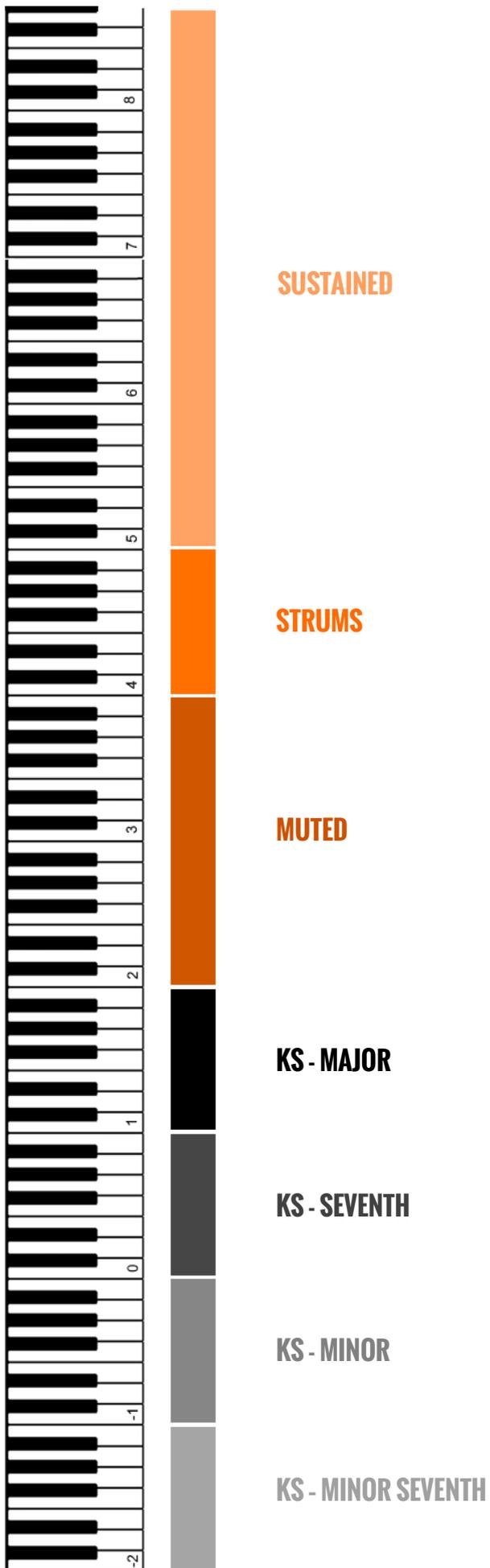
A5 – Knuckle Knock

A#5 – Thumb Knock

B5 – Thumb Hit

Of course you can use these sundry sounds in conjunction with the Plectrum and Finger instruments by loading the Melody instrument into a second track in your DAW.

# Keyboard Layout: Plectrum and Finger Instruments



## The Plectrum and Finger Instruments

The Plectrum and Finger instruments are laid out on the keyboard in exactly the same way as each other. The bottom four octaves, starting at C-2 and going up to B1, are *keyswitches*.

In case you are new to sample library virtual instruments, the interface has the appearance of a piano keyboard, but these keys can be used in two fundamentally different ways.

- The first is most obvious, and these are the *playable* keys. These are keys that will trigger a sound when you press them.
- The second are *keyswitches*. These do not make any sound of their own but change the behaviour of the other keys.

In *Pick-and-Strum Guitar* the keyswitches are used to select different *chords*. We'll come back to that shortly.

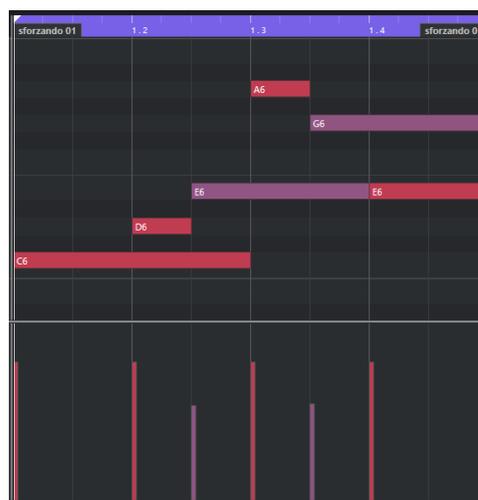
The next two octaves going up the keyboard, from C2 to B3, play *muted notes*. You can use these as an alternative when picking the lower notes on the guitar to give a more punchy, rhythmic sound. The notes begin with low C on the sixth string, as if you tuned the sixth (E) string down four semitones. This section ends with the B note on the open second string.

The next octave up, from C4 to B4, plays the *strums*. We'll come back in a minute and give a more detailed explanation of how this works.

The final section of the keyboard layout is the ordinary sustained notes section. It goes from C5 to G8. This is where you most commonly compose the 'pick' part of the pick-and-strum style of playing. These are not limited to playing the bass notes, but are used for interweaving melodic elements into the arrangements as well. The notes available begin at low C, as if you tuned the sixth (E) string down four semitones, and go up to G on the first string 15th fret.

### Hammer-Ons and Pull-Offs

When you want to do hammer-ons or pull-offs in this section you use a different method to that used in the Melody instrument. You *do not overlap* the relevant note but make sure it stops short at the same time as the next note begins. So for example, say you are playing eighth notes, and you want to hammer on, the note you are hammering on *from* should be only one eighth note long. The note you are hammering-on *to* should begin immediately with the next note.



In this example you are hammering on from D6 to E6 and pulling off from A6 to G6. Other notes can keep sounding without affecting those notes since this layout is polyphonic.

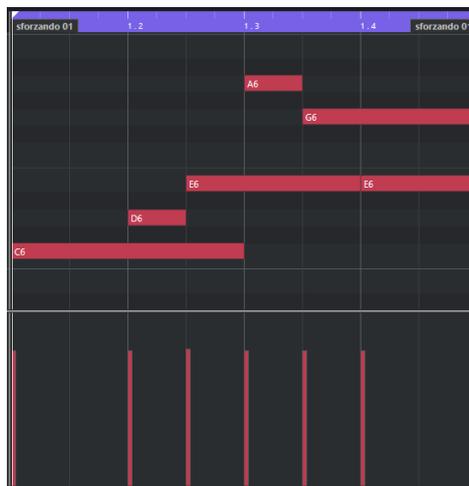
You will notice that the E6 and the G6 in the graphic have a lower midi velocity. In the *Plectrum* instrument there are two sets of samples that are *velocity layered*. In this case it means that the ordinary picked note is triggered by any velocity **above 70** (i.e. 71 and above), and the note you are hammering on or pulling off *to* is triggered by any velocity **up to 70** (i.e. below 71).

So to put it simply:

- **The note you are hammering on or pulling off *from* has to have a midi velocity of 71 or higher.**
- **The note you are hammering on or pulling off *to* has to have a midi velocity of 70 or lower.**

You adjust the *relative* volume of the before and after notes *within* each velocity range, to make sure that the overall result sounds realistic.

In the *Finger* instrument there is only one set of samples, so velocity doesn't matter in that way. Any velocity will work the same way.



## The Keyswitch Section

The keys in the octave from C4 to B4 trigger the various strum samples. That is, which chord will sound in the Strum Section (octave 4) depends on which keyswitch is selected in the lower four octaves of the keyboard. To select a chord you need to put a midi note at the beginning of where you want the new chord to start playing. You do not have to extend the keyswitch midi note (an eighth note will do) because once a keyswitch is triggered it remains in force until a different keyswitch is triggered.

The C major chord has been set as the default keyswitch. This means that when you first load the instrument, even if you do not trigger any keyswitch, the octave 4 strum keys will play the C major chord.

The keyswitches are laid out in four octaves according to four chord types:

- The octave beginning at C1 triggers the major chords.
- The octave beginning at C0 triggers the seventh chords.
- The octave beginning at C-1 triggers the minor chords.
- The octave beginning at C-2 triggers the minor seventh chords.

Within each of these octaves the pitch of the chord is determined by the pitch of the note. So if you wanted a G7 chord you would trigger G0. If you wanted an F#m chord you would trigger F#-1.

Note that although C major is the default chord, once you have selected another chord you would need to specifically trigger the C major keyswitch in order to go back to it.

Finally, the keyswitches only affect the Strum Section. The muted notes section and the sustained notes section are independent and remain the same regardless of which keyswitch is triggered.

## The Strum Section

The octave beginning at C4 is the strum section. Each key in that octave triggers a different strum, except for C4 and C#4. They will be explained shortly. The strum keys are laid out as follows:

D4 – A down-strum on the top four strings

D#4 – An up-strum on the top four strings

E4 – A down-strum of all strings, beginning at the root note. This means that the strum might involve five or six strings, depending on where its root note occurs. So a C major has its root note on the fifth string, while a G major chord has its root note on the sixth string. An exception is made for D chords, in which the fifth string note is included. If you wanted to start a D chord strum on the root note this is already available in the top four strum option at D4.

F4 – A down-strum on the top three strings

F#4 – An up-strum on the top three strings.

G4 – A down-strum on the top two strings

G#4 – An up-strum on the top two strings

A4 – A down-strum on strings two and three

A#4 – An up-strum on strings two and three

B4 – A down ‘arpeggio-strum’ beginning at the root note. An ‘arpeggio-strum’ is slower than a strum but faster than an arpeggio. It is a flourish that is often used at the end of a song.

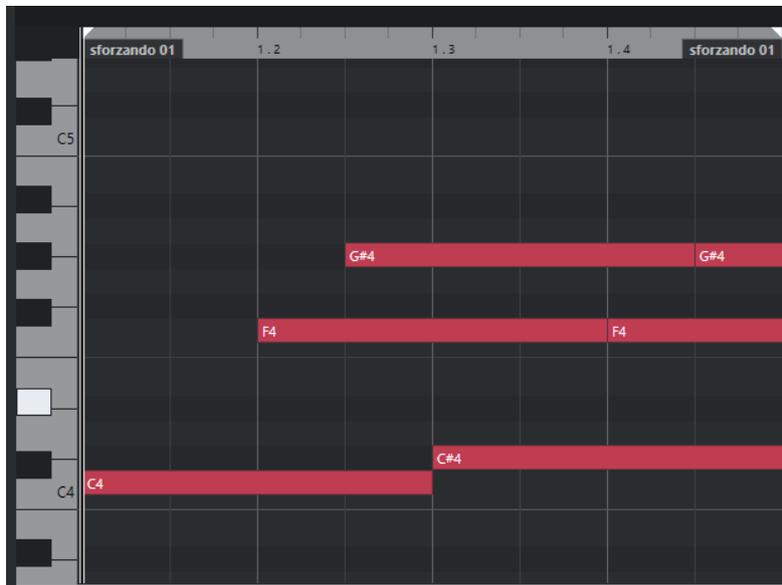
## The Alternating Bass

C4 – The lowest available root (tonic) note in the chord

C#4 – The lowest available fifth (dominant) note in the chord

This option is provided to give a simple way of playing the most common pick and strum patterns. These use either an alternating bass on the root and fifth notes, or a monophonic bass on the root note.

*This means you can set up in a single midi file a pick and strum pattern that will work for any chord, automatically adjusting the bass notes as the chords change.*



This is a helpful way of setting up a track in the first instance. You can create a one-bar midi file (as illustrated above) and then duplicate it for the whole track, and by doing nothing except putting in the chord changes using keyswitches, you can hear straight away the overall shape of the track. Then you can go back and replace the bass notes in those places where you want bass runs and other variations.

### Some Advice on Strums

*In general it will sound better only strumming the top three strings, and often using a down-stroke on the top three and an up-stroke on the top two.*

This is especially so with faster strumming, since when strumming a real guitar, the faster you strum the less time you have, so an up-strum on the top two strings will generally sound more realistic. Use the four string or full strum sparingly for best results. They are intended more for slower playing. The full strum is there mainly to play at the end of the song, or the end of a section, where you want to stop strumming for a period and let the last chord ring on.

Most pick and strum style guitar involves a fairly continuous sound, with each strum allowed to ring on until cut off by a chord change. Not only that, if you are strumming down on three or four strings and up on two, the lower strings keep sounding as well. So when using Pick-and-Strum Guitar it is recommended that you extend the strum midi notes of both the down and up strokes till cut off by a strum of the same kind, or till the end of the bar. In the illustration above see how the F4 and G#4 notes are extended.

If you are strumming the same chord in the next bar, extend the strum through till the next strum in that bar.

Of course there are some styles when you want to cut the strums short to create a more rhythmic, punchy sort of sound. This is especially likely to be the case when using muted notes in the bass.

# End User Licence Agreement (EULA)

## In a Nutshell

When you buy *StrumTracks'* Pick-and-Strum Guitar you are authorised to use it for creating your own musical recordings, but not to sell or give away all or any part of it as a sample library or similar. You may create a physical backup copy of the downloaded product.

## Permitted

This means you can use Pick-and-Strum Guitar for uses such as making records, demos, sound tracks, commercials, jingles, theatre, computer games or multimedia.

## Not Permitted

The samples may not be sold or reused in another sample library or similar. You **MAY NOT** resell, trade, lend, rent, copy, duplicate, upload or download to any database or server. The samples and instruments remain the property of *StrumTracks* and are licensed for use by the buyer only.

## Installation

Installation of this library constitutes full acceptance of these terms. Any use outside these terms would require written authorisation from *StrumTracks*.

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